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ABSTRACT

The visual media, particularly film, has challenged today's educators by competing for students' time and interests and by providing a relevancy that books designed for school use do not have. Using film study to combat the supposed immorality of theatrical films and employing instructional film to transmit information has provided a negative precedent for the methodology of film teaching. To combat this, only qualified, well-prepared teachers should teach film, study guides should be avoided in that they tend to be literary rather than cinematic, students should be taught to perceive what is in the film rather than to apply arbitrary standards, and both the artistic expression of film and the blunt economic facts of the film industry must be presented. Using the visual media in this way gives students the tools necessary for visual literacy and constitutes a new and vital challenge to educational philosophy and practice. (JM)

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FILM: THE REALITY OF BEING

by Rodney E. SHERATSKY

I.

As teachers, we have become so conditioned by the methods of educational research that we believe the only valid study is one with an abundance of data and a plethora of statistics. These we convert to attractive graphs which grace our unread appendices. And so, to give our studies the tone of academic importance — and to satisfy our education professors who genuflect before The Altar of the Controlled Study — we prepare questionnaires, tabulate the results, and plot graphs to summarize our findings.

I suppose I'll have to go through some of these motions — after all, we are educators, hopefully, in the finest sense of the word. And our conference is sponsored by an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. But let me assure you that my bow in the direction of academic respectability will be neither long nor low. The wonderful thing about the movies is that, by their very nature, they antagonize those who would make them academically respectable. That is, they defied academic respectability until schoolteachers tried to push film into the formal curriculum. But this is just one abuse we'll discuss later. Let's turn now to the statistics. I don't think anyone in this room will be surprised to hear that the average high school student watches about 15 thousand hours of television before he graduates, sees about 500 movies in in theatres, and spends just about 10 thousand hours in class.[1] (Of course, each school system offers its own conflicting report. According to an informal study conducted by Eugene Best, English Department Chairman at Northern Valley Regional High School in Demarest, New Jersey, most of the non-print oriented students spend four to six hours each day after school, not before the image screens, but on the telephone. The topics of conversation are trivial — to us. Yet the telephone offers students mutual comfort and reassurance. This past summer I worked with culturally, intellectually, and economically deprived teenagers who went to the movies only three times a year. Obviously, a film is *not* the medium of this type of teenager. And if we're going to be honest, we might have to face the possibility that film is the medium of the youngster who has at least an upper middle class economic background.)

Being teachers, we are prone to worry. And worrying makes us wonder. Why do students see so many films and watch so much television? Isn't there a danger that students are spending too much time watching junk? Isn't there anything we can do to help students cultivate tastes and standards? Of course, we decide, there is something we can do. Teach the media because an enlightened audience will demand better products. Only two years ago, I believed this. Now I'm not certain. Let someone tell me this today and I think, "That is the position of the schoolteacher wearing the gown of the moralist." Teaching the media to alter tastes is advocated only by those who remain aloof from

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the culture and refuse to understand it. Instead of wasting time preparing courses of study with clearly defined aims and objectives for the teaching of film, we must take the time to understand WHY students are spending so much time watching movies on the television and theatre screens instead of doing what the traditionalist would prefer — reading.

Nat Hentoff, the jazz critic, social commentator, and novelist, has suggested a reason. Reviewing the circumstances which made him write *Jazz Country*, his novel for teenagers, Hentoff observed that, although the book was a success with the critics, it was not with the intended audience — the adolescent. Three teenagers questioned Hentoff.

"How come no one in *Jazz Country* ever felt hung up or got his kicks from sex?"

"And why was there nothing about marijuana or any kind of drug in the book?"

"I just don't believe that the white boy in your book had parents who didn't bug him. Not only about hanging out with black people, but about everything."[2]

After reviewing the books written for teenagers and the materials published in high school textbooks, Hentoff continued:

> My point is that the reality of being young — the tensions, the sensual yearnings and sometimes satisfactions, the resentment against the educational lock step that makes children fit the schools, the confusing recognition of their parents' hypocrisies and failures — all this is absent from most books for young readers.
>
> These days a girl does occasionally get pregnant in such a book — or, rather a friend of the protagonist does. Or a boy slips into what the therapists call antisocial behavior. But the point of view of the author, even when intended as that of the beleaguered youngster, is closer to Rose Franzblau or some other Dr. Pangloss than it is to the complicated sense of being young in America that adolescents feel.
>
> Where is the book that copes with the change in sexual values — if not yet sexual behavior on a large scale — among adolescents? Where is the book that even mentions an erection? And what of marijuana and LSD and banana-highs? What is there about society that is leading more and more of the young to drop out of it, if only momentarily and experimentally? And some do take the whole trip. What is life like among the Diggers in San Francisco? What are the losses as well as the releases in being "free" in that way?
>
> There are others of the young, some of them as young as 12 and 13, who are wondering what alternatives there are to tuning in and dropping out. They go on peace marches; they picket; the boys among them worry about the draft. Not only about being killed but about killing. Where is the novel that copes with a teenager's revulsion to this particular war in Vietnam and with the exceedingly difficult choices when the time comes? What is involved in being a conscientious objector, inside one's self as well as outside? Will Canada be an answer? Or maybe jail? Do adults have the right to make you kill? And if not, how do you assert *your* right to live and let others live?

> There are so many parts of the lives of the American young that are alien to books for them, and to many books of adult fiction. There are many black youngsters experiencing a rush of black consciousness through the example of a Stokely Carmichael, or the legend of Malcolm X, or the sounds and fury of neighborhood black nationalists. But what happens to such a youngster — in his relations with his parents, in his school, when he's through with school?
>
> And what of the many white — middle class youngsters who have not yet been processed into the McNamaras and Humphreys and Goldbergs of the future? They know what they don't want to be — like their parents for one thing — but they are far from certain they will find other ways of making it which don't require the suppression of spontaneity, sensuality, honesty. Where are the books about them?[3]

Hentoff's comments might offend some of our political sensitivities, but can we fault his main point? Materials prepared for teenagers skirt or avoid the burning issues so crucial to them. In what public high school class is the work that comes as close to *Nobody Waved Goodbye* in analyzing the hang-ups of adolescents and their parents? In what public high school class is the book that comes as close to *A Time for Burning* in analyzing race relations in America? In what public high school class is a work that comes as close as *Night and Fog* in condemning our century's most notorious crime against humanity? Granted, many more teenagers might run to see *Gidget and the Pill* and *Beach Blanket A Go Go.* But those who want to see films which explore the issues Hentoff raises and schools cowardly avoid can see them on the screen. Aren't some teenagers spending Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday Night(s) at the Movies because our required classroom materials do not have the vitality and the guts they can find on the screen? If the movies are escapist fare, we'd better ask ourselves why teenagers are escaping from what the school is offering.

II.

If the history of screen education in America is an indication, for 54 years we have worried about our students' escapes to the movies.

The history of screen education in America[4] is as depressing as its 1960's renaissance is exciting. While hearing the history, many might remember George Santayana's statement, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Just as the printing press made it possible for more people to own books, the discovery that illustrations and art work could be mechanically reproduced and widely distributed made the visual media more accessible. The first popular form of the visual media was *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* founded in 1856.

By 1895, the motion picture was reaching many, many people. By 1910, so many Americans had seen movies that some were beginning to wonder about their effect, the social and moral influence of the movies. The educators and religious leaders concluded that theatrical films were morally and socially dan-

gerous and that restrictions should be applied to protect those who might be corrupted. Note, please, that screen education began as an attempt to foster desired moral values. (Parenthetically, I might note that morals continue to be the special province of the teachers who feel a work can be judged only in terms of the moral it presents. Last April, when I asked one teacher why he decided to show John Huston's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* to his eleventh graders, he remarked, "Because it presents its moral so forcefully." When I asked what the moral was, he answered indignantly, "Stealing is evil and even you, Dr. Sheratsky, would have to agree that it is.")

Only two forces are required to condemn film: moral guardians and schoolteachers. The moral guardian condemned films by calling them immoral. The schoolteacher condemned movies by looking upon them as teaching aids. Because some educators had used lantern slides as teaching aids, it seemed possible to use films to enhance lessons. Even New York City's Board of Education realized the use of films. In 1919, the City established a Department of Visual Instruction. From this office, the teacher could borrow films. One can only hope that 48 years ago, the City teacher did not have to fight his way through a plethora of application and requisition forms to borrow films for his classes.

As a tool, the instructional film was used to transmit information. Teachers showed films and asked questions about their contents. Yet teachers never studied the students' understanding of film as an art. Many educational films were made and shown. (Incidentally, the use of film as an instructional tool is not an idea of the past. Read the catalogue published by New Jersey's own State Museum.)

Instructional films flourished in the classrooms. But commercial films did not. Why show films which encouraged evil and immorality? In 1913, *The English Journal* published an article praising the commercial film. Its title is amusing: "Making the Devil Useful." Its author, Robert W. Neal, reported that commercial films seen by students are ideal topics for composition. Other journals later published articles which offered the same idea.

By 1922, the film situation had suffered. After all, wasn't the exposé of Hollywood's drug and sex scandals enough to prove that this was the most corrupt city in the world? How did Hollywood try to improve its image? By devising a censorship code supervised by the Hays Office. Still educators and other professionals wondered, "Does the theatrical film represent a moral threat to children?"

Once again, education seemed to be the answer. More schools began to offer courses in film appreciation. By the 1930's, New York and New Haven offered film courses.

Not only were film courses offered, but a research study about film and its relationship to children was conducted by Mary Abbott of Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1927. The Payne Studies, which investigated acquiring information, forming attitudes, emotions, conduct, and health, were conducted from 1929-32. The conclusion? Motion pictures *did* have an effect on children, an adverse one. The studies convinced many educators that film appreciation should be taught, if only to protect the innocent.

And the drive was on. It was the responsibility of the English teacher to offer such courses. Why? Because film education was supposed to be similar to literary education.

The National Council of Teachers of English began a program of film teaching and invited William Lewin to conduct experiments in film teaching. The study, financed by a one thousand dollar grant, was to show the change in students' tastes following a semester's work in film appreciation. At the end of one year (and nine thousand dollars of his own), Lewin reported that students' tastes *had* improved. He claimed, "The chief result of this instruction is in the direction of higher ideals . . . movies help teachers to develop in the young desirable attitudes and ideals." Later the NCTE commented, "Underlying all methodology in the use of the photoplay is this basic principle of visual education. Pictures impart information faster than do words. The photoplay is capable of telling a story faster in a given space of time than anything an ordinary pupil can read within that time." Why offer film study? By exposing children to selected films, they could be protected from the evil effects of the commercial film. Film was useful to further the study of English. Remember, in 1913, films were used as materials for composition. By the 1930's films were used to teach right conduct. Edgar Dale's *How to Appreciate Motion Pictures* was another product of the thirties. (Incidentally, I was invited to use it in 1955 when I first began to teach.) Dale's emphasis was a moral one with some attention given to the techniques of filming, and scant attention to the aesthetics and creativity of film making. With its strong moral emphasis, it's not surprising that Dale's text sold 20 million copies. With encouragement and study guides sponsored by the National Film Board of Review, Scholastic Magazines, and Teaching Film Custodians, schools sponsored film programs. How many schools? It's hard to say, but in 1936, 345 teachers colleges sponsored courses about the use of films in the classroom.

How did the 1930's teacher approach film? As he would literature. Classes discussed the literary aspects of a film. That such an approach was limited didn't bother many teachers for Elizabeth Pollard, who prepared a handbook on film study, remarked, "The English or dramatics teacher says, 'I know so little about motion picture appreciation.' You need not be unduly worried about this, however, for only a few people have much information upon the subject. The available information is so limited that one can soon become an authority."

Fortunately, some teachers disagreed with the cookbook patterns of Dale and Lewin. Before World War II, they realized that a literary bias is exceedingly narrow. By World War II, film study was gaining additional converts and many of the converted refused to be restricted by a literary approach.

By 1941, the war had come and film study had gone. Films were not to entertain. Films were to instruct.

After World War II, professional journals began to include articles by advocates of film teaching. A few film classes were begun. And with the rise of television, educators were again worrying about the harmful effects of the visual media. By 1948, the push was on. Yet it had not gained the widespread — though misdirected — support it had in the thirties.

According to Arno Jewett's 1959 survey, sponsored by the United States Office of Education, 285 courses in grades 7-12 had curricular units in the mass media. They existed on paper, of course, not in practice. New York State had two pages of its English syllabus devoted to film study. And Mississippi still lists its 1930's goal: to develop appreciation and good taste in the choice of motion pictures. In Minneapolis, Minnesota, students see one entertainment

film a year during a school day. Why? ". . . to promote the reading of fine books and to increase enjoyment and appreciation of good films." In that order!

We who are here this morning are demanding film study. We have missionary zeal. And we had better have an abundance of zeal, high spirits, and intelligence, because we are faced with four curses. Film rentals are expensive. Our English curricula still emphasize a print culture. Too many believe that the visual media are frills and entertainment. Too few teachers are able to teach film.

Barring an occasional article in the *English Journal* and *Film Society Review*, it is difficult to obtain evidence which reveals the basic procedures of film study in today's secondary school. The evidence of college approaches, collected by the American Council of Education for its *Film Study in Higher Education*, is more systematic. Basically, there are three approaches, all of which we in high school should avoid. First is the historical survey. Just as the English literary tour usually begins with *Beowulf*, so the film survey begins with *The Birth of a Nation*. The survey emphasizes names, periods, and dates. The second approach is the comparative-aesthetic. Here the emphasis is on music and film, dance and film, the novel and film. The aesthetic, like the historical approach, is supposed to add a tone of academic respectability to a medium considered by our traditionalist colleagues as a bastard art. The third is the functional approach which synthesizes the historical and comparative-aesthetic. The functional approach considers ways in which film operates and why it uses certain types of content, approaches, and structure.[5]

Colin Young, Chairman of the Department of Theater Arts at the University of California at Los Angeles, has stated why these procedures won't work in film. And such procedures could be justified only by the schoolteacher mentalities which insist on categorizing ideas and attitudes. Young states:

> There is an irrational quality in art which irritates and confounds those who are trying to put knowledge of art into systems. That is why so many art historians talk gibberish or end up in sterility. Scholars in many disciplines seek casual lines to explain their fields, and often professors of film attempt to make themselves respectable by conforming to what they think is expected of them. They end up looking like prostitutes at a church wedding, not because they are but because they feel uneasy enough to look the part.[6]

What Young advocates is a fourth approach — and it is only this one which will not kill film for our students.

> If I am right in saying that we must begin with an assumption of student interest, as well as student taste and sensibility, and if I am also correct in believing that the class is more important as an audience than as a class in the traditional sense, then I must begin in all cases with what they know, trying to work towards what they don't know yet. This is not, after all, such a bad pedagogic principle. Furthermore, it is the only one with which a teacher of film can survive.[7]
>
> . . . To begin with, students must learn to experience film as a contemporary art, not as a classical one. Later there is time enough to seek progenitors of contemporary films. A strict chronological approach is the worst one imaginable for teaching film history.[8]

III.

If my speech thus far has stressed the negative aspects of film as it is taught, and has been taught, perhaps it is because I am afraid. For 50 years, well-intentioned schoolteachers have tried to kill their students' love for the movies. It can happen again now that film is back. The film is the medium students can flee to after spending a day in our schools. As James Coleman of Johns Hopkins University has observed, ". . . the average adolescent is really *in* school, academically, for about ten minutes a day."[9] I am worried because I know what passes for courses in art, music, and literary appreciation. Art appreciation, in too many schools, degenerates into identifying slides. Music degenerates into identifying passages from long playing records. And we, at the conference, know that many of those not here emasculate literature by forcing memorization of dates and lines. At the other extreme is an approach just as treacherous. Its advocates argue, "Well, film is in. Film is a major part of my students' lives. So I'll show movies as often as I can." In their zeal to court students by drowning them in "their" medium, these zealots are guilty of what Sidney Hook has called the middle-aged whoring after their students' love. Jacques Barzun said it more discreetly: "Americans began by loving youth, and now, out of adult self-pity, they worship it."[10]

Listen to one teacher who has explained how she finally became a film addict after her experiences with students who realized the power of movies long before she had. While hearing a college lecture about films based upon Bernard Shaw's plays, she was converted:

> Well, he hooked me and I haven't been off the junk since. The habit's got so bad I've become a pusher myself.
>
> This is how the junkie operates: I began by smuggling the real stuff into English class concealed in a short story, novel, or stage play. Their respectability in the curriculum forestalls suspicion.[11]

In a coy fashion, the teacher has made her point. We know that many parents, schools, teachers, and administrators still consider film a frill. Disguise the frill with a literary approach and film can become honorable.

But what do we do once we've convinced these people that film should be a regular part of the student's life? More important, what do we do with film once we've excited students about it?

Our addict has a suggestion. But it will infuriate anyone who loves films so deeply that he resents a person who resorts to pedagogical gimmicks to arouse others:

> One day last May, the English 12 students were screening David Lean's *Great Expectations.* Twenty minutes after the first reel was set spinning, I stopped the film, switched on the lights, and directed over their surprise: "Take the remainder of the period to write a critical analysis of the film techniques used by the director. Be specific. Include comments about lighting, sound, camera angles, transitions. David Lean, the director of this film, also directed *Doctor Zhivago.* I've posted a floater on the side board about special student rates. You might go to *Zhivago.* Use it for a cross-medium study of the novel and film for your final term paper. Questions? Go ahead.[12]

Here, of course, is the abortion of the comparative-aesthetic approach! Why would anyone who loves films treat *Great Expectations* so shabbily?

Great Expectations is a two-hour film. How fair was this teacher to David Lean and her students when she stopped it after 20 minutes? How perceptive can their critical reactions be when students have seen only one-sixth of the film? Isn't it really a dirty trick to snatch something away in favor of a written assignment? Is this an honorable approach? One wonders if this pedagogue expects her students to review books after they've read only portions of them. Does one experience Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* when he hears only the final choral movement?

These remarks are intended to attack not this particular teacher as a person, but as a teacher who would use such methods. These practices are as wrong as the one used by a teenage group leader who projected Alan Resnais' study of concentration camps, *Night and Fog,* and wondered why the teenagers couldn't bear to discuss it during the coffee hour he had planned following the film. The teenagers, of course, were more astute than their professionally trained leader. They knew that *Night and Fog* is one of those personal experiences that cannot be shared immediately after its projection.

The comments of the students who were teased into seeing *Doctor Zhivago* were, in their own way, as revealing as those silent reactions of the youth group's members. The students commented:

> . . . "It was magnificent." "Breath-taking close-ups — blossoms, daffodils, snowflakes. A field of flowers would dissolve into a field of snow, and you knew the seasons had passed." "Windows were a regular motif, steamed with heat, glazed with frost, framed in spring blossoms." "The 'Lara' theme held the story together. Noises like sharp whistles and coupling of railroad cars were used for rapid and abrupt transition."[13]

Such comments killed the film with kindness. But then, when a film offers little content, what else can you do but talk about the visual trappings? But not one student reached this conclusion. Not one of those superficial comments alluded to Robert Bolt's treatment of characters, theme, conflict. Not one memtioned THE important subject of the film — the Russian Revolution. By focusing on the visual aspects of the film, the students ignored all of its pseudo-psychological, pseudo-historical, and pseudo-sociological implications. Granted *Doctor Zhivago* offers little of psychological, historical, or sociological importance. But why couldn't the students identify these weaknesses in Bolt's screenplay? An approach which stresses only the visual aspects encourages only a superficial analysis.

IV.

I am loath to devote a Sunday morning to a discussion of teaching methods. Let me not ruin Sunday morning by mouthing pedagogical principles. Let me compromise by offering these suggestions for teaching film. The joy of film teaching is that there is no ONE method. The astute teacher has a method which most excites his students. His method is wrong only if his students become bored with film. Here, then, are some suggestions.

1. *Teach films only if you've seen movies for many years of your life. It helps if you think deeply and read widely about them.* If you discovered films

only last year, you are not qualified to teach film this year. Think of this comparison. How many of us know beginning secondary schoolteachers who teach journalism and advise newspapers because they were forced to do so if they wanted contracts to teach the subjects for which they were prepared? And look at the state of journalism in their schools! Unless you've seen and thought about films for many years, you cannot qualify to teach them to students. Talk about them, yes. Teach them, no. Nor do you qualify if your serious consideration of films ended with one college course in film. You must be enthusiastic about film and your enthusiasm must lead you to see many films — the popular commercial films as well as the underground movies. The technically inept on both levels can be revealing! Read many books by film theorists as well as the comments by responsible film critics in the weekly, monthly, or quarterly magazines. Jonas Mekas' arrogant defense of the inept will balance Bosley Crowther's proud defense of the dated and jaded.

Another point: Don't teach film because you want to make your reputation in virgin educational territory. If you're an opportunist, ruin virgins in non-educational fields. Education no longer can afford to give you any more of its territory to play around in.

2. *Avoid the temptation to use a study guide for a film.* Study guides, usually written by such well-intentioned English teachers as William Lewin whose perspective is literary rather than cinematic, too often reduce films to literary works with morals.

One of the typically poor study guides is the one Paramount Pictures prepared for *Is Paris Burning?* At the end of the guide are 24 suggestions for discussions and projects. Of the 24, only eight discuss the film itself. Although the guide stresses that *Is Paris Burning?* is different from other war films, nowhere in the 12 pages are teachers asked to have students consider how Rene Clement's film is different from other war films. The guide's words stress the tragedy of war, yet not one mentions the film's images, editing, dialogue, music and effects. The extent of film work is reached with one question: "As you know, the Liberation was re-enacted for the camera. Was this well and realistically done? Were there flaws or mistakes? Single out one or two touches that conveyed realism — or unrealism — to you."[14]

What can take the place of one of these study guides? An intelligent discussion led by a teacher who really knows films, really has an appreciation for life, and really understands students. This is what Colin Young meant when he said that film study begins with the students and their interests.

3. *Try to be one of those rare film teachers who helps students to perceive what is original and important in a new work.* Just because a film may "break the rules" of traditional movie making, the teacher cannot assume that the film is worthless. Only a teacher with a feeling for life can help students perceive what is original. As film critic Pauline Kael told me:

> This preparation is difficult for teachers who really believe there are rules and standards for good taste. It's hard to convince teachers there aren't in the arts, and there never were. . . . Teachers adhere to this notion because we've all been trained that way in school and this is the approach of the teachers' colleges. To them, art is a matter of good taste. . . . They really think aesthetics is a series of rules. Just as teachers give out rules for compositions, they suggest rules for art and aesthetics. . . . Applying

rules is the only way some teachers can judge easily. It's a very good and unusually rare teacher who recognizes some work that's new, yet necessarily breaks rules.

4. *Meet the students on THEIR level of movie experiences.* Because *you* think *Gentlemen's Agreement* is a classic, you can't assume it will reach your students. The film that "turned you on" 20 or 30 years ago is not the film that reaches students today. As Miss Kael advised:

> Discuss why they're interested in these films and television programs they see. Try to extend their areas of going to films into historical and other areas they're skimping. You really have to work with students awhile to find out what it is students react to and why. If you start by simply introducing them to such documentaries as *The River* and analyzing them, students don't connect them with their movie going experiences.

5. *Be honest with your students.* Level with them by making them aware of the brutal economic facts of the movie industry which dictate — and often emasculate — the content, development, and style of the films they see. For example, after students have seen Antonioni's *Blow-Up* and they ask you about it (and students will ask you if you're not like the teacher down the hall students can't respect), discuss how censorship pressures were responsible for cutting ten seconds from the photographer's teeny-bopper orgy. Explain how its fear of censorship forced Metro-Goldwyn Mayer to remove its name from advertisements and screen credits.[15] Let the students realize how many forces in the industry govern what films they will see. Invite the local theatre manager to discuss how he has little choice in the selection of films he must play. Let him explain how the distribution system forces him to show *Is Paris Burning?*, *The War Wagon*, and *The Naked Runner* even though he knows they are among the worst films of the past 12 months. Ask the projectionist to explain the techniques necessary for clear and sharp projection. If the students are astute, they might realize how the closed projectionists' union coddles some alcoholics who project reel four before reel three. Ask the local newspaper reviewer to explain what he imagines to be his service to his readers. Students might then realize why local reviewers dismissed *Accident*. Reviewers dismiss films beyond their intellectual grasp. It is the critic who understands what is original in a work of art. Although it is probably impossible to invite a director to discuss the making of a popular film, if the teacher reads *Cahiers du Cinema in English*, he can explain why Francois Truffaut thought his film *Fahrenheit 451* was all but ruined because of it's ego-maniacal star, Oskar Werner. (See Truggaunt's "Journal of *Fahrenheit 451*, Parts One, Two, and Three" in *Cahiers*, Numbers Five, Six, and Seven.) If he listens to WBAI, the teacher can explain why Roger Lewis, co-producer of *The Pawnbroker*, had difficulty finding people to back it. As one potential investor complained, "Does the pawnbroker have to be a Jew? And why a concentration camp? Why not have him sent to an American prison for a crime he didn't commit?"

If a text must be used, the only worthwhile one is the newspaper *Variety* which reveals the blunt economic facts of film life. *Variety* indicates how movies are made because of the influence of the trend setters. *Variety* proves that only naive schoolteachers consider film an art; the realistic *Variety* staff knows a point schoolteachers can't perceive; a film is primarily a business venture. If a film manages to become a work of art, it is only in spite of the pressures the front office has exerted on the film maker.

If your film course stresses the art of the film, yet ignores the business of the industry, it is thoroughly dishonest and phony. Why subject students to yet another field taught by people whose knowledge and understanding are shallow and one-sided?

V.

We cannot afford to present a shallow and one-sided approach to film. Nor can we play it safe by showing only those films which won't rock the community's boat.

Only the movies offer adolescents the medium which discusses those issues publishers are afraid to mention or explore in their books designed for schools. What class text has *Nobody Waved Goodbye's* sharp focus on teenagers' sexual anxieties? In *Nobody Waved Goodbye,* students see the parents they don't want to become. *Nobody Waved Goodbye,* unlike class texts, does not suppress teenagers' spontaneity, sensuality, and honesty. What class text offers *Night and Fog's* uncompromisingly brutal indictment of man? Resnais' film does not fantasize war, the officially sanctioned process of widespread murder. Class texts might mention the optimistic view that well-intentioned projects to improve race relations can succeed. But *A Time for Burning* is honest enough to show that such projects can and do fail as well as destroy the project's designer and those who sabotage them.

If the 1960's resurgence of interest in film is to succeed, it will be for several reasons. As one film teacher has commented:

> Hope for the future lies in several areas. One is that the visual media, especially film, are beginning to be appreciated as forms of artistic expression, by more and more people. Also, with improved 16mm. equipment, film is becoming much more accessible. Finally, there appears to be a new breed of educators emerging: educators who have lived with and learned from the visual media all of their lives. These people understand its language, respect its form and conventions, and while realizing it has serious faults and shortcomings, they do not fear it blindly. They see, as did their early predecessors, the need for education in this ever-expanding aspect of contemporary life, but they are not motivated by the fear that the commercial use of these media predicates moral and social decline. Rather, they are concerned that those in society illiterate in the language of the visual media be given the tools with which to prepare and utilize it effectively.
>
> Today the educator in the visual media stands where the educator in film stood alone in 1930 — on the brink of what could prove to be a new and vital development in educational philosophy and practice. However, the size of the obstacle may once again prove insurmountable. If they do, the *classroom without walls* as Marshall McLuhan calls the new media, may well replace the traditional counterparts in the future. If the schools get too much out of touch with real life and interests of their pupils, they may well find themselves in competition for survival with the media. This is the magnitude of the challenge of the screen.[16]

R. E. Sheratsky
October 1, 1967

CITATION OF SOURCES CONSULTED

1. Richard B. Byrne, "Wider Lens and Sharper Focus," *Arts in Society: The Film Issue* (Winter 1966-67), p. 7.

2. Nat Hentoff, "Tell It as It Is," *New York Times Book Review*, May 7, 1967, p. 3.

3. *Ibid.*

4. For this history, I am grateful to Ronald Polito's article, "The History of *Film Teaching* in the American School System" (*Screen Education*, September/October, 1965, 1 Nightingale Road, Clapton, London, E.5, pp. 10-18). Mr. Polito's article is based upon Stuart Selby's dissertation, *The Study of Film as an Art Form in American Secondary Schools*, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

5. Mark Slade, *National Film Board Institute: A Report*, Conference on Screen Study, Department of Education, Ontario, Canada, October 28, 1966, pp. 8-9.

6. Colin Young, "Films Are Contemporary: Notes on Film Education," *Arts in Society: The Film Issue*, p. 24.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

9. Quoted by Paul Goodman in *Compulsory Mis-education* and *The Community of Scholars* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962, 1964), p. 73.

10. Jacques Barzun, *The House of Intellect*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 95.

11. Sister Mary Laboure Harig, "Reeling in English Class," *English Journal*, January, 1967, p. 38.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, p. 39.

14. A Study Guide: *Is Paris Burning?*, p. 12.

15. Vincent Canby, " *Blow Up* May Get New Code Review," *The New York Times*, February 7, 1967, p. 33.

16. Polito, pp. 17-18.

ADDENDUM — Written Nineteen Months Later

1. Regarding Nat Hentoff's questions about the books for teenagers which avoid the issues crucial to their lives, one is tempted to add still more questions. Where are the books for teenagers which suggest that, among the nation's student rebels, there might be a core of student fascists motivated not by the altruistic ideal of necessary change, but by the selfish goal of personal advancement? How were the Diggers responsible for the dissolution of their San Francisco colony? Why are high school students throughout the country angry about the genocidal policies against Biafrans? What pressures — political or personal — cause a Stokely Carmichael to renounce passionate involvement in the civil rights movement and welcome all the securities of upper middle class America, including marriage to folk singer Miriam Makeba and a $70,000 home in California? Why do many of our "heroes" renounce their causes which captured our involvement? How does the renunciation of important ideals convert former admirers to contemporary cynics?

2. Unfortunately, Jacques Barzun's ten-year old observation about Americans courting youth is even more painful today in 1969. In film, for example, how else can one account for *Wild in the Streets*, *Three in the Attic*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, and *The Graduate*? These four financially successful films were financed by organizations governed by the middle aged, flirting with the youth market. The conceptual flaws in the films result in works of dubious artistic merit. After all, when the middle aged attempt to groove with youth, the result has to be depressing: one over 40 has to be out of step (rhythmically, politically, intellectually, artistically, and cinematically) with those under 25.

3. The prospects for distributors to prepare intelligent study guides are still bleak. Read the guides for this year's films, *The Shoes of the Fisherman* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer) and *Joanna* (Twentieth Century Fox).